

American Battle Monuments Commission

Lorraine American Cemetery and Memorial

LOCATION

The Lorraine American Cemetery is situated three-quarters of a mile north of the town of St. Avold (Moselle), France on Highway N-33. St. Avold, which lies 28 miles east of Metz and 17 miles southwest of Saarbrücken, can be reached by automobile from Paris (220 miles) via toll autoroutes A-4 and A-32 in 4 hours. From the St. Avold exit of A-32, Highway N-33, cemetery signs will lead the visitor to the cemetery. The St. Avold train station, located 3 miles from the town, can be reached by rail from Paris, Gare de l'Est, in approximately 4 hours; taxicabs are available in the vicinity of the station. There are hotels at Metz, Saarbrücken and St. Avold.

HOURS

The cemetery is open daily to the public as show below:

SUMMER: 16 April – 30 September
8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. – daily

WINTER: 1 October – 15 April
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. – daily

When the cemetery is open to the public, a staff member is on duty in the building to answer questions and escort relatives to grave and memorialization sites.

HISTORY

The U.S. Third Army resumed its pursuit of the enemy across France early in September 1944, after a brief halt because of a shortage of fuel. Except at Metz, where extremely heavy fortifications and resistance were encountered, the U.S. Third Army advanced rapidly and crossed the Moselle River. By late September, Nancy was liberated and a juncture with the U.S. Seventh Army, which was advancing northward from the beaches of southern France, was made near Epinal. Upon the joining of these two Armies, a solid Allied front was established extending to the Swiss border.

Throughout October, the two Armies pushed aggressively eastward against increasingly strong resistance. The U.S. Third Army drove toward the Saar River and the U.S. Seventh Army into the Vosges Mountains, as the enemy fortress at Metz continued to resist. On 8 November 1944, the U.S. Third Army launched a major offensive toward

the Saar River. During this offensive, the main fortress at Metz was encircled and it capitulated on 22 November. Its outer forts, however, did not surrender until 13 December. Bypassing this resistance, the U.S. Third Army continued to advance, capturing Saarguemines on 6 December 1944. By mid-December, several bridgeheads had been established across the Saar River and the U.S. Third Army had begun preparations for breaching the Siegfried Line. Meanwhile on 11 November, the U.S. Seventh Army to the south launched an attack eastward capturing Saarebourg on 20 November 1944. Moving rapidly, it outflanked, then penetrated the vital Saverne Gap in the Vosges Mountains. Sending the French 2nd Armored Division to liberate Strasbourg on the Rhine River, the U.S. Seventh Army turned northward advancing along the west bank of the Rhine against the defenses of the Siegfried Line, simultaneously aiding the U.S. Third Army's operations to the north.

Throughout these operations, the U.S. Ninth Air Force and the U.S. First Tactical Air Force rendered vital air support to the U.S. Third and Seventh Armies, respectively, despite severe rainstorms and cold weather.

The progress of the two U.S. armies was halted temporarily by the enemy's final major counteroffensive of the war, which began in the Ardennes Forest on 16 December 1944. Officially designated the Ardennes-Alsace Campaign, it became known as the "Battle of the Bulge." The U.S. Third Army moved quickly northward to counter this threat, as the U.S. Seventh Army and the French First Army to its south extended their lines northward to cover more front. The second phase of the enemy's final counteroffensive was launched on New Year's eve against the U.S. Seventh Army and the French First Army. The assault began as a drive for the Saverne Gap followed by an attack across the Rhine toward Strasbourg. After furious fighting on all fronts in bitterly cold weather, the last major enemy offensive was halted and the U.S. Third and Seventh Armies resumed their assault on the Siegfried Line. The line was soon broken and all enemy units were cleared from the west bank of the Rhine. In March 1945, the two U.S. armies crossed the Rhine River and began their drive into Germany.

SITE

The cemetery site covers 113 ½ acres of rolling landscape on the west edge of the Saar mining region. Immediately to the north and east are natural stands of oak, pine and other trees; these have been extended by a planted enframement around the northeast and south sides.

A temporary American military cemetery was established on 16 March 1945 about one-half mile to the south of the present cemetery. The surrounding area was liberated by troops of the 80th Infantry Division on 27 November 1944. When the permanent cemetery was built, the present site was chosen because of its superior location, prospects and aspect. It is the largest American military cemetery of World War II in Europe. Buried here are 10,489 of our military Dead, representing 41 percent of the burials which were originally made in this region. Most of those interred here gave their lives during the advance to the Rhine and the advance across Germany in the spring of 1945. Construction of the cemetery and memorial was completed in 1960.

ARCHITECTS

The architects for the cemetery and memorial were Murphy and Locraft of Washington, D.C.; the landscape architect was Allyn R. Jennings of Oley, Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LAYOUT

The Lorraine American Cemetery is entered from Highway N-33 at the west end of the cemetery. From the main entrance, a linden-lined avenue leads past the service and utilities area on the left and rises gently to the right toward the Visitors' Building and parking area. A short distance southeast of the visitors' Building, at the crest of the hill, is the memorial flanked by Walls of the Missing on either side. A flagstaff from which the American flag flies daily, stands in front of each wall. A broad flight of steps lined with yew hedges descends from the east front of the memorial to the graves area. A dual path enclosing a grassy mall leads one-third of the way through the graves area where it separates to encircle a wide oval grave plot. Beyond the oval plot, the paths continue and the ground rises to a knoll on which an overlook affords a prospect of the entire cemetery as well as of the countryside for miles to the west.

THE MEMORIAL

The memorial, which consists of a tall rectangular tower and the Walls of the Missing extending to the north and south thereof, is normally approached from the rear (west) side. This tower, 67 feet high, is of Euville limestone from the region of Commercy near the Meuse River some 70 miles to the southwest; its walls are carved with bold vertical flutings. The dark stone of its base is Belgian "*petit granit*." On the west facade is a sculptured rounded bearing the obverse of the Great Seal of the United States. High on the tower are three superimposed angels of Victory each bearing a laurel wreath, designed by Walker Hancock of Gloucester, Massachusetts.

The entrance to the memorial building is at its east side through tall bronze doors. Above these doors, carved in Euville stone, is a tall (26 feet) figure of St. Avold extending his blessing upon those who rest here or who are commemorated on the Walls of the Missing. "St. Avold" is another spelling of "St. Nabor," a Roman Christian soldier who was martyred about A.D. 303 in the reign of the Emperor Maximian; above his head is an Archangel with trumpet.

INTERIOR

On the far (west) wall opposite the door are five sculpture figures lighted from the north by a tall window. This group represents the eternal struggle for freedom, typified by the youthful figure in the center; flanking him are typical religious and military heroes who, throughout history, have taken part in this struggle – King David, Emperor Constantine, King Arthur, George Washington. The sculptor of these figures and of the exterior figure

of St. Avold was Michael Lantz of New Rochelle, New York; all of the sculpture was carved by Jean Juge of Paris.

Beneath the five figures is inscribed:

OUR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN
ENDURING ALL AND GIVING ALL
THAT MANKIND MIGHT LIVE IN FREEDOM AND IN PEACE
THEY JOIN THAT GLORIOUS BAND OF HEROES
WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE

The wall bearing the sculptured figures which form the background of the chapel is of Massangis limestone from the Cote d'Or region of France; beneath the figure is the altar of French green Antique Patricia marble upon which is inscribed this text from St. John X, 28:

I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH.

The stone pews are of Euville limestone.

The east, west and north interior walls are of French yellow Salamandre travertine limestone from west-central France; the base course is of Ruoms, a compact limestone from south-central France. The memorial floor is of Buxy, a French compact limestone from Burgundy, with green Antique Patricia marble inlays.

On the left (south) wall is a large map in colored glazed ceramic portraying military operations in Western Europe from the landings in Normandy until the end of hostilities. A smaller map inserted in its lower right-hand corner: "FROM THE MOSELLE TO THE RHINE" records the fighting in the region of St. Avold.

The maps were designed by Pierre Bourdelle of Oyster Bay, New York and Georgette Pierre of Paris from data furnished by the American Battle Monuments Commission; they were fabricated by Miss Pierre. Accompanying these maps are inscriptions in both French and English, of which this is the English text:

ON 6 JUNE 1944, PRECEDED BY AIRBORNE UNITS AND COVERED BY NAVAL AND AIR BOMBARDMENT, UNITED STATES AND BRITISH COMMONWEALTH FORCES LANDED ON THE COAST OF NORMANDY. PUSHING SOUTHWARD THEY ESTABLISHED A BEACHHEAD SOME 20 MILES IN DEPTH. ON 25 JULY, IN THE WAKE OF A PARALYZING AIR BOMBARDMENT, THE U.S. FIRST ARMY BROKE OUT OF THE BEACHHEAD WEST OF ST. LO AND WAS JOINED ON 1 AUGUST BY THE U.S. THIRD ARMY. TOGETHER THEY REPULSED A POWERFUL COUNTERATTACK TOWARDS AVRANCHES. CRUSHED BETWEEN THE AMERICANS ON THE SOUTH AND WEST AND THE BRITISH ON THE NORTH, AND ATTACKED CONTINUOUSLY

BY THE U.S. EIGHTH AND NINTH AIR FORCES AND THE ROYAL AIR FORCE, THE ENEMY RETREATED ACROSS THE SEINE.

THE ALLIED GROUND AND AIR FORCES PURSUED VIGOROUSLY, SUSTAINED BY THE HERCULEAN CHIEVEMENTS OF ARMY AND NAVY SUPPLY PERSONNEL. BY MID-SEPTEMBER BRITISH AND CANADIAN TROOPS HAD ENTERED THE NETHERLANDS; THE U.S. FIRST ARMY HAD REACHED THE GERMAN BORDER; THE U.S. NINTH ARMY HAD FREED BREST; AND THE THIRD ARMY HAD REACHED THE MOSELLE IN FIRM CONTACT WITH THE U.S. SEVENTH AND FRENCH FIRST ARMIES ADVANCING NORTHWARDS SINCE 15 AUGUST FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN. THE OPENING OF THE PORT OF ANTWERP ON 28 NOVEMBER MATERIALLY EASED THE LOGISTICAL BURDEN. METZ FELL ON 22 NOVEMBER AS THE THIRD ARMY MOVED INTO THE SAAR. ON ITS RIGHT, THE SEVENTH ARMY, AIDED BY THE FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE, DROVE TO THE RHINE AT STRASBOURG, WHILE FRENCH FORCES FREED MULHOUSE.

THE ENEMY LAUNCHED HIS FINAL MAJOR COUNTEROFFENSIVE ON 16 DECEMBER IN THE ARDENNES. PROMPT TACTICAL COUNTERMEASURES AND THE SUPERB FIGHTING OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN BROUGHT THIS EFFORT TO NAUGHT. A CONCURRENT OFFENSIVE LAUNCHED BETWEEN SAARBRUCKEN AND COLMAR MET THE SAME FATE. DURING FEBRUARY AND MARCH THE WEST BANK OF THE RHINE WAS CLEARED IN A SERIES OF SWIFT MANEUVERS. THEREUPON, IN RAPID SUCCESSION, AMERICAN FORCES SEIZED A BRIDGE AT REMAGEN, CROSSED THE RHINE AT OPPENHEM, THEN STAGE WITH THE BRITISH, NORTH OF THE RUHR, THEIR MAJOR ASSAULT. SWEEPING ACROSS GERMANY, THE ALLIES MET THE ADVANCING TROOPS OF THE U.S.S.R ON THE ELBE TO FORCE THE COMPLETE SURRENDER OF THE ENEMY ON 8 MAY 1945, 337 DAYS AFTER THE INITIAL LANDINGS IN FRANCE.

High on the wall above the maps, as well as on the opposite (north) wall, are the flags of these components of our military services: Air Corps, Armor, Cavalry, Christian Chaplain, Jewish Chaplain, Chemical Warfare Service, Coast Artillery Corps, Corps of Engineers, Field Artillery, Infantry, Medical Department, Military Police Corps, Navy Infantry Battalion, Ordnance Department, Quartermaster Corps, Signal Corps and Transportation Corps.

Above the doorway is a stand of two United States and two French national flags flanking a 13-star Betsy Ross flag. On the north wall are six color photographs of the American military cemeteries located in Europe.

Above these photographs is this inscription taken from General Dwight D. Eisenhower's dedication of the Golden Book in St. Paul's Cathedral in London:

HERE WE AND ALL WHO SHALL HEREAFTER LIVE IN FREEDOM WILL BE REMINDED THAT TO THESE MEN AND THEIR COMRADES WE OWE A DEBT TO BE PAID, WITH GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THEIR SACRIFICE AND

WITH THE HIGH RESOLVE THAT THE CAUSE FOR WHICH THEY DIED SHALL LIVE.

Flanking the door, to the right, is the dedicatory inscription:

IN PROUD REMEMBRANCE OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HER SONS AND IN HUMBLE TRIBUTE TO THEIR SACRIFICES THIS MEMORIAL HAS BEEN ERECTED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A French translation thereof appears to the left of the door.

THE WALLS OF THE MISSING

Extending to the north and south of the tower and facing the graves area are the Wall of the Missing upon which are inscribed the name, rank, organization and State of 444 men of the United States Army and Army Air Forces. (It will be recalled that during World War II the Air Forces formed part of the United States Army.) These gave their lives in the service of their country, but their remains have not been recovered or identified. Their names include men from 43 different States. At the end of the walls is this inscription as well as a French translation:

HERE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF AMERICANS
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY
AND WHO SLEEP IN UNKNOWN GRAVES.

THE GRAVES AREA

The graves area is reached by a broad flight of steps from the front of the Memorial. It consists of nine plots laid out about the axis in a symmetrical pattern, divided by gracefully curved paths. The headstones are set in straight in each of the plots.

These 10,489 Dead who gave their lives in our country's service came from every State in the Union, and the District of Columbia, as well as from Puerto Rico, Panama, Canada, the United Kingdom and Mexico.

One hundred and fifty-one of the headstones mark the graves of "Unknowns." Among the headstones are 26 instances in which two brothers lie side by side. Among the headstones, also, is one which marks the burial of three men whose names are known and who were buried together; a bronze tablet covers the grave and records their names. There are three Medal of Honor winners whose headstones are inscribed in goldleaf.

These inscriptions are engraved upon the Euville stone pylons at the overlook:

North Pylon:

TO THESE WE OWE THE HIGH RESOLVE
THAT THE CAUSE FOR WHICH THEY DIED
SHALL LIVE.

South Pylon:

THROUGH THE GRAVE AND GATE OF DEATH
MAY THEY PASS TO THEIR JOYFUL RESURRECTION.

PLANTINGS

The whole cemetery is enclosed within a plantation of Scotch pine interspersed with group of beech, oak and maple. Color has been introduced not only by the flowering shrubs already mentioned but also by means of long borders of pink polyantha roses, both on the memorial terrace and flanking the central mall. North and south of the Memorial, large masses of *Rosa rugosa* and *Cotoneaster horizontalis* link the terrace with the burial area, while further groups of *Rosa rugosa* in association with scarlet roses provide additional color at the intersection of the paths, north and south of the burial area.

Flanking the Memorial Tower on each side are massive hedges of European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) backed by lindens (*Tilia vulgaris*).

In the graves area are informal groups of trees consisting principally of English oak (*Quercus robur*), honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), white and red flowering hawthorns (*Crataegus oxycantha*) and the pagoda tree (*Sophora japonica*). Flowering shrubs have been grouped in the open grass areas and include hibiscus, philadelphus, hydrangea, lilac and buddleia.

At the far (east) end of the central mall is the knoll and overlook, backed by a group of trees with shrub underplanting in which predominate the dwarf horse-chestnut (*Aesculus parviflora*), snowball hydrangea (*Hydranges arborea*), *Cotoneaster horizontalis* and St. Johnswort (*Hypericum prolificum*).

VISITORS' BUILDING

The Visitors' Building and parking area are situated at the end of the entrance drive, just southwest of the Memorial. It contains the superintendent's office and a comfortably furnished room where visitors may rest, obtain information, sign the register and pause to refresh themselves. A staff member is on duty to provide information on specific locations in any of the Commission's cemeteries, accommodations in the vicinity, best means and routes of travel, local history and other items that may be of interest.